

EXHIBIT 9
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HB 253

Jim Hagenbarth
Hagenbarth Livestock
P.O. Box 1128
Dillon, MT 59725

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House Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committee
Chairman Van Dyk

RE: Testimony on House Bill 253

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

My name is Jim Hagenbarth and I am a livestock producer from southwestern Montana. I have been involved with brucellosis as a disease for over 40 years, served on the Board of Livestock for 12 years and was chairman two years. Through this tenure I have gained a lot of insight into this disease and how it can impact livestock, the economic viability of the ranching community, cause fragmentation in the GYA (Horse Butte is a prime example), turn elk into a liability instead of an asset on private property, and last but not least, cause bison to either starve within Yellowstone Park or be harvested as they exit. This is all because of a zoonotic disease that society, and the Federal and State agencies have not worked together to address. If we continue down this path, I fear that more wildlife will become infected making it impossible for agriculture to stay on the land in the GYA and we will lose the open space that we all seek. We need to design solutions that solve this problem by making all the parties accountable. House Bill 253 does not do this.

HB 253 has had all language relevant to disease stricken. Management of diseased bison is being given to the Fish and Game, an agency whose past performance has been dismal in managing disease in wildlife. The fiscal note for this bill indicates that the funding to manage the wild bison in Montana be the APHIS funding used by the Department of Livestock to manage diseased bison exiting the Park. How naïve can one be in expecting APHIS to transfer this funding to an agency that does not manage disease. The technical notes indicate that it is not known whether APHIS will enter into a cooperative agreement with FWP whose mission is not disease control. No other funding is identified. The fiscal notes of SB 217 (FWP's reimbursement to livestock producers for tests for diseases transmitted by livestock) eludes to the fact that the diversion of license fees for purposes other than administration will result in the loss of 18.7 million dollars annually. HB 253 was written to allow park bison to wonder outside the Park regardless of disease status. Montana lost its class free status through contact with elk that had a seroprevalence of 5%. This bill will allow bison with a 50% seroprevalence to wonder outside the Park exposing elk and cattle. To date, cattle have not been exposed to Park bison, HB 253 assures they will. I am opposed to HB 253 because it is devious in nature and solves no problems.

Thank You for your attention and for serving the people of Montana,
Jim Hagenbarth